

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



February 21, 2006

Norman Yee
President, San Francisco Board of Education
555 Franklin Street
San Francisco CA 94102

Gwen Chan
San Francisco Superintendent of Schools (Acting)
555 Franklin Street
San Francisco CA 94102

Re: John Swett Elementary School – California Public Utilities Commission Resolution
Opposing Closure and Offering to Work Toward Alternative Solutions

Dear President Yee and Ms. Chan:

At its February 16, 2006 business meeting, the California Public Utilities Commission unanimously adopted the attached Resolution regarding John Swett Elementary School. The resolution contains two parts. First, it opposes the closure of John Swett:

Resolved: That the California Public Utilities Commission hereby appeals to the San Francisco Board of Education to reconsider its decision to close John Swett School so that the children of John Swett School may continue to have a nurturing, safe and supportive neighborhood institution for their elementary education; and

The Resolution explains that the employees of the California Public Utilities Commission have, for more than fifteen years, had a special partnership with John Swett School and have provided tutoring, special events, educational materials, funds and other support for the school. The Commissioners also expressed concern that the students of John Swett School may, if the school is closed, lose the financial and community support of the neighborhood organizations and businesses that its administration has solicited and maintained.

The Commission expresses concern that the Board of Education's decision to close John Muir School was not based on the criteria the board set forth for determining which of San Francisco's schools to close because John Swett is operating at 80% capacity and has more students enrolled than 14 other elementary schools in San Francisco.

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Just as importantly, however, the CPUC offers to work with the San Francisco Unified School District on a better solution than closure:

Resolved: that CPUC volunteers and supporters of the partnership with John Swett stand ready to commence discussions with the San Francisco Unified School District on options and techniques to continue the mission of the school and its vital function in our neighborhood.

The CPUC has a deep commitment to John Swett. Almost 500 CPUC employees signed a petition in support of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' February 7, 2006 Resolution urging the Board of Education to rescind its decision to close John Swett. I am committed to having the CPUC work with other community, government and business leaders to save John Swett, which, in the words of the Board of Supervisors, has a 100 year tradition of education in the Civic Center and Western Addition.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

/s/ STEVE LARSON
Steve Larson
Executive Director

cc: yeen@sfusd.edu, President, San Francisco Board of Education
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Mayor Gavin Newsom
Linda Luevano, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary K-8 Schools

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**RESOLUTION – JOHN SWETT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL****WHEREAS,**

The John Swett Alternative School is a nurturing, safe and supportive school for more than 220 children living in the Western Addition, Civic Center and Tenderloin neighborhoods of San Francisco;

John Swett School has promoted academic achievement and provided a unique arts education program for its students and has been a vital community institution for its students and their families;

John Swett School serves mostly children of color from low income families who have very limited options for providing high quality education for their children;

the employees of the California Public Utilities Commission have, for more than fifteen years, had a special partnership with the John Swett School and have provided tutoring, special events, educational materials, funds and other support for the school;

on January 17, 2006, the San Francisco Board of Education has voted to close the John Swett School and to transfer its students to John Muir School;

the Board of Education's decision to close John Muir School was not based on the criteria the board set forth for determining which of San Francisco's schools to close because John Swett is operating at 80% capacity and has more students enrolled than 14 other elementary schools in San Francisco;

John Muir School is more than a mile distant from John Swett and students transferring from John Swett School may not have safe transportation to John Muir School, and that the Tenderloin School, which is in closer proximity, is at capacity;

the students of John Swett School may, if the school is closed, lose the financial and community support of the neighborhood organizations and businesses that its administration has solicited and maintained;

the faculty, administration and families of John Swett have expressed reasonable concerns that the welfare and education of John Swett students will be jeopardized if their school is closed and the students are required to relocate to John Muir School;

on February 7, 2006, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 9-1 for the Board of Education to rescind its decision to close John Swett, stating that the closure would “end a 100 year tradition of education in the Civic Center and Western Addition” and leave “many among the most at-risk students without a school,” and citing the support of employees of the California Public Utilities Commission and following the submittal of formal testimony of several CPUC professionals and a petition signed by almost 500 CPUC employees.

BE IT RESOLVED,

That the California Public Utilities Commission hereby appeals to the San Francisco Board of Education to reconsider its decision to close John Swett School so that the children of John Swett School may continue to have a nurturing, safe and supportive neighborhood institution for their elementary education; and

that CPUC volunteers and supporters of the partnership with John Swett stand ready to commence discussions with the San Francisco Unified School District on options and techniques to continue the mission of the school and its vital function in our neighborhood.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 16th day of February, 2006.

MICHAEL R. PEEVEY
President
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
DIAN M. GRUENEICH
JOHN A. BOHN
RACHELLE B. CHONG
Commissioners